

To: X ^{the rock in my life.}
^{When I needed one most.}
I AM SO proud of you, little
brother. You're so strong. I will always
love you. Thank you for sharing with me.
♥ Always.
LOVE ALWAYS.

Acknowledgment and additional resources

Albert Serna Jr. shares his story:
[substance.media/gay-latino-and-macho-
c931e022ec47](http://substance.media/gay-latino-and-macho-c931e022ec47)
Frederic d'Eon "Gay Loteria" art project:
[http://www.vivala.com/identity/gay-loteria-
queer-latinx/6187/although-the-chicano-
creator-is-comfortable-and-proud-of-his-
sexuality--fully-living-his-truth--it-wasnt-
easy-growing-up-as-a-catholic-mexican/13](http://www.vivala.com/identity/gay-loteria-queer-latinx/6187/although-the-chicano-creator-is-comfortable-and-proud-of-his-sexuality--fully-living-his-truth--it-wasnt-easy-growing-up-as-a-catholic-mexican/13)
Statistics on homes with LGBTQ children:
[http://stateofopportunity.michiganradio.org/po
st/your-behavior-has-profound-impact-health-
your-lgbtq-child](http://stateofopportunity.michiganradio.org/post/your-behavior-has-profound-impact-health-your-lgbtq-child)

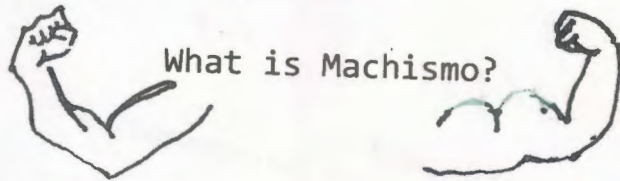


Dear Dad,
Can I still be machismo?
Exploring effects of Machismo and heteronormative
influences on gay Latinos





What is Machismo?



Machismo is the emphasis on **masculinity** and the great pride men are supposed to take in being strong leaders. Machismo favors strict gender roles and hierarchy that support the dominant view of masculinity and submissive nature of feminine traits. Ricardo A. Lopez sums up the Latinx cultural view of Machismo stating, "A real man needs to strive to be the most manly he can possibly be." He further develops a theory that suggests Latinx culture sustains the importance of machismo because men are truly emotional, but from heritage of suppression don't know how to properly express all of this. Therefore, it is continued to be best to keep emotions feminine and separate from how men should behave.



What Is LatinX?

inclusive



acceptance

Latinx is a more inclusive term that allows Latina/os to identify as they chose. It relates not only to sexual identity, but also to different identifying cultures and ethnicities that Latina/o may embody. Many people view the term Latinx as a sign that Latinx culture is moving away from its strict traditional and conservative views and becoming more accepting of alternative lifestyles. For example, X in the study says, "New age Latinx community loves the LGBTQ community because this generation of Latinx people has taken the old view of love everyone and put it into effect."

Introducing "x"

X will be the main voice of this study. He identifies as a gay Latino. As a close friend, I have seen the adverse struggles he faces with identity and challenges of family values. He loves and respects his family, but at times he can like the stranger within the own boundaries of his home because they cannot know the real him. Machismo dominates family life in a way that outsiders him from his own home. The following zine will be an open letter to his family using the interview answers I received from X to show the importance of recognizing how machismo can be restricting.

X is a young adult living in Southern California. He is from Sacramento, California, but moved to LA for school. I remember when X was applying to colleges I was begging him to not leave so far because I would miss him, but he had grown tired of our hometown. He wanted to get away and be himself, freely, without

the fear of someone seeing and his family finding out. I remember going on dates with X and his boyfriends and laughing at how his parents thought it was X and I on a date. I remember laughing at his parents forcing us to sleep in separate rooms at sleepovers because we are a boy and a girl and couldn't be trusted alone at night. But I never stopped to think about how this isn't funny, it is real.

X is amazingly smart and gifted. He works two jobs and goes to school full time. He has definably heteronormative goals of wanting to have a successful job and settle down and start a family. He works extremely hard and focuses on bettering his prospects. But he walks around with tremendous guilt on his shoulders all because he wants to love another man.

The letter that follows is constructed by me. The words are taken from an interview with X and some are my own inspired by conversations and my relationship with X. X reviewed what I wrote and approved it. It is from the point of view of X.

O-T-S-I-B-C-O

g-o-o-g
z-i-n-e

How to be a family

To my mother and father,

How do I begin to tell you all of what I have accomplished, when I still feel like if you knew all of who I was it would ruin everything? If you knew about the men that bring me joy, you would not see me as a successful young man, you would see me as a deviant. If I told you all the feelings I am learning to express, you would tell me I am wrong.

I miss you, but I don't know how to say it. I am free here to finally explore who I truly am and not feel this tremendous guilt of not being who you want. I hurt a lot because we were super close but through finding out being gay we lost our connection as a family. I miss being close to them so much and often times I struggle with being gay just because of the negative feedback I've received from my family. Family is supposed to love you no matter what and support you. I feel that being a part of both communities has limited my ability to belong to one or the other honestly.

I found a family. They accept me. I've built supportive relationships with my friends who show me love. I don't think I have one true blood family member I have been able to tell everything about who I am. But I can tell them. They still think I am doing great. They are proud of every part of me.

But it's not all there. My friend who takes me in the nights I am crying because he broke my heart, they aren't my mother who is supposed to love and support her son unconditionally. My friend that laughs and teaches me to brush it off because I am still a stud, isn't my father who is supposed build up his son to be the strong man that follows in his footsteps.



don't
make
me hide in
the closet

Conflict of identity

How did you react when I told you who I was? You wanted me to change. You almost forced this change as if being gay and machismo was not an option. You formed prayer circles around me begging the gay leave my body. You asked the Lord for help saving me. You pushed me away, and now I don't know how to talk to you as much.



Why
can't
I be
gay
And
Machismo?

The Lord is still my father. I know he accepts me. I know it as much as I know that I am still machismo.

I know that in my relationships I am the manlier partner usually. This leaves me with the responsibility to be the one to protect my partner, make sure they are warm and fed etc. After I came out to you, I was able to convince you that I was a "turned" straight man again. How is it hard to believe that I am still a manly man, I just also like men?

I look forward to the day I settle down with a family of my own. Two dads and two children. A boy and a girl. We will love them. We will always support them no matter what. I don't think I will feel a true family connection until the day I create my own.

Self-and-community-Identifications

I still aspire to be machismo. There are several machismo aspects that I admire and look up to in my life like being the lead of the household. Making a majority of the money for my future family. Protecting my future family. Being the emotional rock for my future family. I am not less of a man for being gay. I feel that that gay community is more accepting of myself because overall the Latina/o community is a little more rooted in conservative views than the gay community. Being a part of the gay community is like an open door to be who I have always been.



I'm
proud
of my
Latino
culture.

I'm
Proud
to be
gay.

I
am a
gay
MAN.
You
can't
strip my
manhood.
Regardless
of who I
love.

this is how I identify.

I can still embody machismo as a gay Latino. I know that I am still able to hang with the hombres at work. I just have to be aware that when I am around this demographic to use different language and dress a little more the way they might. I might lose respect if there are any questions in the way that I dress/speak/act. For example, when I am with my cousins I usually use a deeper tone in my voice in dress in looser pants or clothes so I blend in.

But I am machismo without putting on this act. I work hard and support myself. I shouldn't have to worry about what I say around my family in fear of being ostracized. I love the aspects of myself that are gay and I also love my culture and being machismo.



Hiding himself

there is no devil
inside. I've become a
strong man.

My culture is my symbol of pride. Many Latinx people are proud to be where they are from and although there is no specific example of a symbol used for our culture I know in my heart I am super proud of it.

I would define machismo as a way for me to express my level of manhood amongst my culture. It shows to myself and the rest of my family that I am a good enough man to be responsible for a family. The fact that I am gay takes away from this machismo even though I identify as more of a manly partner in any gay relationship I am in. This is translated to my culture because even though I am the manlier partner I am still seen as having a low level of machismo by my parents. If my family were to find out about this part of my life as well they would probably view me with a low level of machismo. My grandma would ask me "How are you supposed to grow a family and make our family name proud?"

Darkness inside

Lifetime Suicide Attempts for Highly Rejected LGBT Young People

(One or more times)



"you're not good enough"

"disappointment"

I have struggled with depressive thoughts. I worry what will happen if you all find out who I really am. I am stressed, imagining the horror of having to relive the shame you showed me the first time I tried to come to you both. I am extremely paranoid of every word I share about my life to you both. I do not want to lose you, but I don't want to lose myself either.

"NOT ENOUGH OF A MAN"

This depression has translated into eating disorders, drinking, and hiding inside of myself. I fear opening up to others because my own family doesn't show the real me compassion to build healthy relationships out of. I love my parents and I love the real me. I love my culture and I love embodying a machismo male. But I also love other men. Why can't I be free to experience love, happiness, and manhood without the weight of guilt holding me back?

"disgrace"

As my parents shouldn't you be happy to see my happy? I have been with men who have made me smile wider than I imagined. Men that made me forget all about the fact that I am supposed to hide myself and be straight. My manhood has nothing to do with my sexual orientation. I wish you could accept me for who I am, so that I too can accept myself.

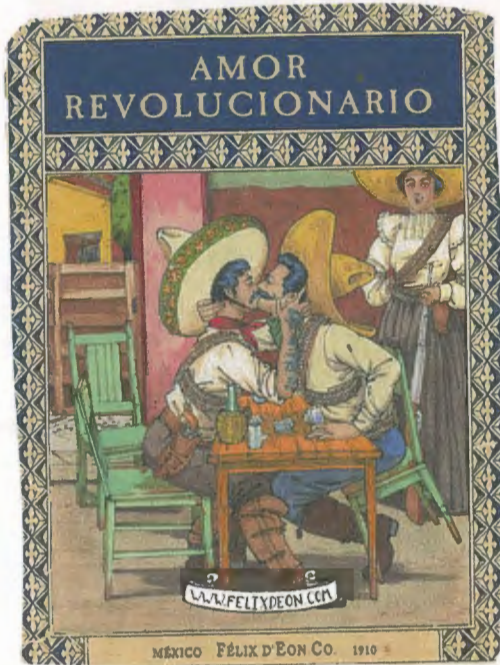
"it's just a phase you don't know what you want"

"abomination"

Proud to be myself

Overall, I want to come home mom and dad. I love you. I want to share my triumphs with you. I want to feel liberated to be who I am and share those experiences with you both.

Can we ever live that way? Can you accept me for the man I have grown up to become? Can you recognize that I am machismo and bring honor to our family name while being a gay Latino?



This is MR.

I will always love you. I just wish you could love me no matter what.

I will learn to love myself. Regardless of if you accept me.

Love always, X

Who are you?

Fill this page with the labels that describe who you are. Look at the different labels. Understand how freeing having this space to say who you truly are may make others who don't have liberty to take pride in themselves feel.



Sunday June 12, 2016 49 people died at Orlando's Pulse gay nightclub on Latino night. The shooter didn't kill these people because of anything to do with machismo, but it is still important to talk about spaces for these LGBTQ Latinx bodies. As X even talked about, there is a dissonance with finding a place to belong. At home, they do not fit the traditional gender roles that machismo and marianismo values have constructed for them to fit into. They go out in search of a community that accepts them for who they are. Gay clubs are an essential safe house for these LGBTQ Latinx individuals because they are surrounded by acceptance and understanding. An article by Veronica Bayetti Flores discusses feeling, "...robbed of a pivotal space where queerness and Latinidad have been able to not just co-exist, but be celebrated...rare feeling of belonging, home, and safety for our full selves."

Why spotlight this discrepancy?

As the words from X and evidence shows, there is no **space** for those who identify as a gay Latino to embody who they truly are. This can have dangerous internal effects like depression and mood disorders, but even further society rejecting these bodies can lead to mass tragedies like the Pulse Nightclub.

Representation

There needs to be greater representation of who these communities are. They are not cultural deviants that should be feared as destroying traditional values. They still uphold morals. They still strive for greatness. They are still human. They deserve to be represented and better understood and the best way to do so is to share their stories with the public. They are not others or strangers. They are humans and they have a right to life and safety.

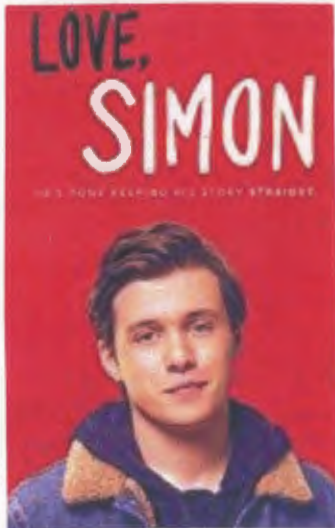
Safety ≠ Privilege

Youth Believe They Can Be A Happy LGBT Adult



A future Sanctuary

There are many modern attempts at mainstream society to incorporate more LGBTQ into its broadcasts. For example, there is the gay couple featured on *Modern Family*, the TV show *Glee* featured gay and lesbian characters, and there is a new movie *Love, Simon* being released about a teen boy coming out as gay. However, most the LGBTQ relationships the media feature are shown through the **racial frame**, all the couples are white. They don't experience coming out to a family whose culture is more conservative and less accepting of "alternative" lifestyles. They don't feature the struggles with identity and the isolation from family. In fact, most media examples of LGBTQ influenced drama seemed to be resolved in thirty minutes, rather than showing the reality of the lifetime effects some LGBTQ people experience by coming out to their communities.



We must be an ally to these LGBTQ members in our society. We must be there for them when they need a space. We must be aware of how values and the language we use outcasts some lifestyles. For example, we must stop using the phrase "that's so gay" about feminine actions, because as shown through X gay does not equal a lack of machismo. We must recognize the existence of LGBTQ communities with in our own spaces and offer them sanctuaries like nightclubs, stores, parks, any space where they can be who they are without fear or condemnation. We must open up our media,

Authors Note and Impact

This project is very personal as something I have witnessed X go through and struggle with in life. Therefore, I utilized **letter writing** format to symbolize the personal level of X's struggle and truly carry his voice to the project. I am at an advantage because I can publish this without hiding my identity, but for him if these words were ever traced back to him it could ruin the little relationship he has left with his family.

Still, it is important to recognize the **autoethnographies** of those who deal with these adversities, but are not in a place to voice their struggles. No research could show the true grapple with identity gay Latinos trying to still embody machismo and familial respect face as well as broadcasting the experience does.



Through coming to know X he has become a little brother to me. We are completely open to each other about everything and so I have seen how this issue deeply hurts X. It haunts me that someone that is doing everything right (going to school, working, and being successful) still feels like he is doing something wrong. X is machismo and gay he is walking and breathing proof that these two identities can exist together.